

Bouncing around in the waves on a surf mat is fairly safe and loads of fun too, and is a good preliminary to taking up board surfing. Bodsurfing or *paipo* surfing using swim fins (bodsurfing takes a little more skill to be done well) are also good ways to familiarize yourself with waves and currents and the acrobatics of other surfers. With this background and the friendly advice of a more experienced surfer or professional instructor, you will be ready for your first introduction to the surfboard. The day is sunny and warm—the beach crowded with pleasure seekers. You sense the keen thrill of taking up a new and challenging sport. Soon you will be lost in the mysterious realm of hydrodynamics as they apply to an innocent looking object—the surfboard.

You select the calmest area, if possible free of waves and currents, rocks or coral. Carrying your rented or borrowed board (it is too soon to buy your own) underarm to the water, you lay it on the surface and attempt to place yourself on top. Part of you slips off to the right, then another part to the left. You grab the rails with both hands and stiffen up, determined to assert your mastery . . . Splash! it dumps you over and now the board is on top and you're underneath.

We forgot the wax! The deck must be rubbed with paraffin wax to provide a non-slip surface. That done, you discover next that the board has a definite personality. It likes to balance its rider fore and aft just about level with the water. Most contemporary boards have a slight camber called a scoop. This uplift to the forward end is designed to fit the curvature of the wave, to help avoid pearl diving and enable certain maneuvers on waves which we'll describe later. But for now, if you are balanced properly fore and aft, the forward end of the board will slightly clear the

water. A body position one-half an inch either way may make a noticeable difference.

At first, balancing athwartship is partly a matter of keeping the board moving ahead. Like a bicycle, it balances better when in forward motion. Also, the muscles in your back, abdomen, legs, arms and shoulders will have to develop the natural reflexes of balancing your weight. This takes time and practice. It may help to keep your legs somewhat apart at first; then, as your sense of balance improves, trim them in neatly together at the center line of the board. A little patience . . . and when you get dumped, a little more . . .

Realizing that the lower your center of gravity, the less likely you are to tip over, you try to flatten everything out. Splash! over you go again. Patience has its rewards. Finally you and the board make your peace. That's fine, says your instructor, start paddling. Reaching ahead, you pull down deeply (not out and around) and the board thrusts forward. You're in business.

At this stage, you must learn how to turn the board efficiently while paddling or sitting. While paddling, the method is simply to drag a foot in the water, toes and forefoot lifted, on the side you wish to turn to and pull a little harder with the arm on the other side. It helps to press the dragging foot against the side as the opposite arm makes its pull. This doesn't make a very quick turn possible and you have to keep up the paddling. A quick turn is achieved by sitting up on the board, preferably quite aft of center so the board angles sharply up in the air, then sculling around with a circular motion of the feet and lower part of the legs. Having hardened your paddling muscles and acquired fair mastery of these first few elementary skills, you are now ready for your first attempt in small waves.